CONCLUSION

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the main research objective of this thesis is to understand the role of voluntary organizations in rural development in India with special reference to community participation and community empowerment. Beside these broad issues, the specific issues addressed in this research were the following: (a) decentralized micro-level planning, (b) special role of VOs, (c) role of state, (d) local resource mobilization, and (e) socio-political environment of rural development. Since rural development is an all-encompassing terms, the issues of water management and water conservation has been taken as an indicator of rural development.

The research questions mentioned in the introductory chapter are as follows:

i) Is the existing approach to rural development planning in India viable for an effective development process, If not what would be an alternate approach?

ii) What are the distinct features of voluntary organizations, which make them a unique agency of rural development?

iii) What are the various factors, which determine the success or failure of a voluntary organization?

iv) What is the role of voluntary organizations in promoting community participation and community empowerment in the context of rural development?

In previous chapters, we had a detailed discussion on various issues related to our research questions. The case studies of two voluntary organizations namely People Science Institute and Tarum Bharat Sangh were presented. While making concluding remark, we will attempt to respond to our research questions, as outlined in the introductory chapter, by analyzing and comparing empirical data and placing it in our theoretical framework. This concluding chapter is divided into two sections: the first section deals with the issues of the existing approach of rural development and the need of an alternate approach in the context of water management. Issues related to voluntary organization, community participation, and community empowerment have been discussed the second section.
5.1 Alternate Approach to Rural Development

If the persistence of mass poverty is any indication at all, the situation today is same as it was before the independence, Kurien's statement clearly indicates the failure of development policies adopted in the post-colonial India. As we discussed earlier, the existing approach to development in India is technology and economy based with a highly centralized bureaucratic administration. The failure of this approach had in recent years drawn the attention of the academicians and development planner to explore an alternate approach.

In the course of our discussion in this thesis, we have persistently acknowledged that the existing approach, which is largely based on modernization model of western countries, does not suit to the Indian socio-economic structure. The distinct traditional values and resource base demands for an indigenous approach, which gives enough scope for the exploitation of local material and human resources and utilization of indigenous technology. Therefore, the alternate approach views the development through micro planning at the village level and involvement of the people at all levels of the project vis-a-vis planning, resource mobilization, technology selection, implementation, and benefit sharing. Thus, Gandhi's idea of village Swaraj through the optimum use of local resources, technology, local manpower, and self-governance seems to be very close to our scheme. However, the rapidly changing technology and value system and economic globalization does not permit to go all out for the Gandhian model, it would require certain modifications to suite the contemporary socioeconomic, political, and technological environment. The main features of the alternate approach as compared to existing techno-economic approach are listed below.
Table: 5.1

Comparison of existing and alternate approach to rural development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Existing Model</th>
<th>Alternate Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving Force</td>
<td>Rapid Industrialization</td>
<td>Meeting the basic needs of the people and conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit Distribution</td>
<td>Maximizing the monitory wealth of the nation</td>
<td>Sustainable development and social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Centralized and non-participatory</td>
<td>Decentralized and participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource distribution</td>
<td>Transfer of resources from poor to rich</td>
<td>Resource sharing through employment of means of production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge System</td>
<td>Neglect of traditional knowledge and technology in favour of modernism</td>
<td>Build on traditional knowledge and technology base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with nature</td>
<td>Emphasizes mono-culture</td>
<td>Harmonious, recognizes strength in diversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Water Management and Conservation

Now we will place the issues of water management and conservation in the context of these two approaches and try to assess their viability in the present scenario. As was discussed in the fourth chapter that the existing water management strategy is based on the techno-centralized and macro level planning. The existing approach envisages the water management through the construction of big dams and major irrigation projects. This explains the low priority accorded to utilization of highly dispersed resources like soil moisture in favour of large projects. This logic emerges, as stated earlier, from a centralized model of development planning and governance. On the other hand, the alternate approach would recommend the promotion, conservation, and revitalization of local water management techniques such as well, ponds, small dams, and water shed. Some of the advantages of these techniques are as follows:

5.2.1 Major irrigation projects do not cater to the remote area, which are difficult to reach and can not be catered by the canal irrigation system. On the other hand, the revitalization and promotion of traditional local water resources would reach each and every corner of the country.

5.2.2 Locally devised water management techniques are necessary for conservation of soil moisture. Our findings from Alwar have revealed that rejuvenation of traditional means (Johad) has increased the water table in the area, which was declared as “Dark Zone” till 1985. In addition neglect of traditional water resources also reduces the total irrigated area, as was experienced by PSI in Palamau. (refer diagram 5.1)
5.2.3 Use of indigenous technology ensures the optimum utilization of local resources, in addition it gives employment to idle labor. In a case like TBS, it gives opportunity of volunteer participation to the beneficiaries by giving SRAMDAN, which not only reduces the project cost but also imbibes a sense of belonging-ness with the project. On the other hand, large-scale projects, which are money intensive and based on highly sophisticated technology, do not give any scope for the utilization of local resources and they are poorly managed also as generally people lack sense of belonging-ness hence do not take any interest in its operation & maintenance.

5.2.4 The alternate approach of promoting the cultivation of low water consuming crops assures conservation of soil moisture in the long run while the existing approach which recommends high water consuming crops to increase the production, has fatal impact on soil moisture. The case of Palamau may be again recalled where total irrigated area has consistently been declining due to the neglect of local means and promotion of major project.

To sum-up, the adoption of big projects not only adversely affects the agro-climatic conditions but it also leads to decline in people’s control over water resources. Some of the researchers have taken a serious note of this and recommended micro water shed projects at the large scale. (Please refer: table 5.2)
### Table: 5.2

**Water Related Problems in Different Zones**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zones</th>
<th>Land Water related constraints</th>
<th>Strategies Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Himalaya</td>
<td>Rain water run-off</td>
<td>Watershed approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Himalaya</td>
<td>Soil erosion &amp; degradation</td>
<td>Comprehensive plan for soil conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Gangetic Plains</td>
<td>Under-utilization of ground water</td>
<td>Watershed, Storage Tanks, Ground water exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Gangetic Plains</td>
<td>Flood prone area, under-utilization of ground water</td>
<td>Flood Control &amp; Exploitation of ground water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Gangetic Plains</td>
<td>Flood, Water Logging, Under-utilization of ground water</td>
<td>Flood Control &amp; Exploitation of ground water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-Gangetic Plains</td>
<td>Drainage and Flood</td>
<td>Water Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Plateau &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Ravines &amp; Soil Erosion</td>
<td>Watershed Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Ravines &amp; Soil Erosion</td>
<td>Watershed Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Plateau &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Water Logging</td>
<td>Drainage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Plateau &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Rain Water Management</td>
<td>Watershed Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast Plains &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Flood &amp; Water Congestion</td>
<td>Modernization of Tank Management, Drainage Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Plains &amp; Ghats</td>
<td>Rain water Run-off</td>
<td>Water Harvesting Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat Plains &amp; Hills</td>
<td>Under-exploitation of Ground Water</td>
<td>Watershed Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the water management related problems mentioned in above table have arisen out of neglect of traditional water management techniques and micro-level projects.

### 5.3 Specialized Role of Voluntary Organization

In view of the alternate approach to rural development as discussed above, voluntary organizations are expected to play a very important role. There are certain areas, particularly community participation and community empowerment, where we do not have any alternate to VOs.

#### 5.3.1 Essence of VOs

At the theoretical level, voluntary organizations grow out of people’s needs to meet certain objectives. Therefore, voluntary organizations are need-oriented people’s initiative. Tarun Bharat Sangh seems to be a perfect example of a grassroots initiative. The growth of TBS from an initiative of five volunteers to a large-scale organization is marked by a consistent reciprocal relationship between the VO and the community. The people always supported TBS in its activities and the community support was complemented by VO’s timely interventions to solve their problem. Thus, TBS presents a
perfect case of partnership between the people and the VO and support our assumption that VO's are grassroots organizations.

However, the PSI case suggests that it is not necessary that only locally based organization can achieve desired results. An organization with true spirit, honest approach and appropriate methods can be equally successful. This indicates that the spirit of voluntarism, as suggested in Gandhian approach, is equally important as the local base. However, Vos with local base and rapport with the community has an added advantage. The local base of organization becomes crucial when a problem requires a prolonged and consistent effort.

5.3.2 Gram Swaraj, Community Empowerment, and VOs

Earlier in our discussion, we stated that the concept of Gram Swaraj does not seem to be appropriate in the present scenario. Our study in Alwar revealed that the concept of Gram Swaraj would still be applicable in a particular socioeconomic and cultural environment and it can be effectively realized. Most of the villages in Thanagazi are geographically isolated and very difficult to reach. In such a situation, self-sufficiency for meeting every day requirements was the only way to make their lives easy. TBS has provided them training in indigenous system of medicine, cloth weaving, schools, Gram Sabha's control over local political & legal system which enables these villages to claim self-sufficient. The government system is highly centralized and bureaucratized and it is inherently incapable of promoting self-sufficient villages. Franda (1983) has rightly said that VOs play a significant role in local self and skill development activities.

5.3.3 Local Suitable Technology

There is no denying the fact that for an overall and steady development of rural areas, highly sophisticated and externally imposed technology have failed to produce results. R.N. Kapoor has strongly recommended that VOs are the best agencies to identify locally suitable and indigenously developed technologies (Kapoor: 1991-92). Our empirical data from Alwar and Palamau further strengthen the above argument. In both the places, local
5.3.4 Local Resources Mobilization

The case studies of two VOs suggest that only land and labour are the local resources, which can be mobilized for any development. Our case studies have plenty of instances where community has contributed towards the project cost in the form of Shramdan. This could be possible only because of consistent awareness generation efforts and VOs sincerity and commitment. Thus the voluntary involvement of the villagers can be obtained only if people feel associated with project and its execution. VOs are best in doing this while the government system stands nowhere near them in this regard.

5.3.5 Organizing the Villagers

As we discussed earlier, the main obstacle in the process of decentralization of development planning and its implementation is the lack of organizational skills in the village community. The government agencies have failed to do so and the Panchayati Raj experiences are its best example. However, due to their community base and innovative skills, the VOs seem to be better suited for this job. Pani Panchayats in Palamau and Gram Sabhas in Thanagazi were successful experiments. These local bodies were not only effective in managing the water structure but they went beyond and effectively intervened in larger socio-economic and legal issues at the village level.

5.3.6 Voluntary Organization as Advocates

M.Z. Khan (1988) has rightly said that the villagers are seldom educated, articulate or skilled enough to be able to project their interest. In such a situation, VOs act as advocates of the helpless and the disadvantaged villagers. For example, when the forest department started harassment of the villagers of the Sariska Wild Life Sanctuary, the TBS took-up this cause and protected the villagers’ interest very effectively. VOs not only have to fight against the government but also against the third force, the market. The private contractors lobby in Palamau and mine owners in Thanagazi were also dealt appropriately by PSI and TBS respectively.
5.3.7 As Critic

Constructive criticism plays a significant role in influencing the government policies to suit interest of the rural poor. Being autonomous and independent of government control, VOs are capable of critically evaluating development planning and policies and putting forward their views, which makes them the most effective pressure group.

PSI has been a very consistent critic of big dams and major irrigation projects and it has been also successful to some extent in mobilizing consensus on this issue from different quarters of the society. More or less on similar line, TBS has also been highly critical of any modernization efforts, which could threaten the socio-cultural and economic fabric of the village community, which is necessary for the village Swaraj. In addition, TBS has openly criticized the government’s policies on the issues of Jal, Jangal, and Jameen (water, forest, and land), particularly in Sariska Area. Besides a critique, TBS has also been actively involved in Satyagraha against issues threatening to traditional socio-economic fabric of the local people. The most significant of them are: protest against large-scale mining & government policies affecting environment while dealing with villagers living in Sariska.

5.4 Relationship between the State, the Market, and the VOs

The success of a project implemented by NGO is highly dependent on the symmetry of triangle formed between the state, the market, and the VOs. These three do not exist in isolation as all three of them are simultaneously involved in pursuing the same task. At the national level planning, voluntary sector is not involved at the same level as the state and the market. However, at the micro level, which is our concern, these three present a very dynamic relationship. The history of development in India bears enough instances of a conflict between the state and the voluntary sector. In the colonial period, this conflict could be justified, as the voluntary service efforts of Gandhi and others in the early decades of 19th century were the silent expression of freedom struggle. In the post colonial India, the distinct approach to development work and their role as advocate often bring VOs in conflict with the state.
There is no denying the fact that in an ideal situation VO and state may work in partnership, where state would support and supervise the program at macro national/district level and the VOs would handle the things at the micro (village) levels. The PSI’s case in Palamnu presented a perfect case of partnership between the state and the VO. However in the later phase of the project state’s, indifferent attitudes adversely affected the project. Besides the interplay between the state and the VO, the money politics nexus in Palamau added another dimension. The private contractor lobby felt that PSI is taking their share of cake in public construction work and made an all out effort to eliminate the PSI. Once they got backing of the state, they could easily drive the PSI out.

PSI reported that the continuous pressure from the private construction lobby (market forces) was the main reason behind the sudden withdrawal of district administration from the project. Therefore, the Palamau presents a case of the perfect partnership between the VO, the state and the community on the one had and the negative impact of nexus between the bureaucracy, the politicians and, the local construction lobby. (Please refer diagram: 5.2)

**Diagram: 5.2**

The relationship between VO, State and Market

![Diagram](image)

The TBS case further strengthens our argument where the VO was persistently in conflict with the government policies, despite not having a very cordial relation with local government officials, TBS could still successfully continue with their project only because they had a perfect partnership with the community. Besides the contribution
from the community, TBS could successfully mobilize some resources from the international donor agencies. This kind of association with international donor agencies often enables the VOs to effectively handle the indifferent attitudes of the state and the market (please refer diagram: 5.3)

Diagram: 5.3
Relationship between the State, the Market, the VO, the Community and the International funding Agencies

From the above discussion we can conclude:

1. The relationship between the state and VO may range from complementary to contradictory, depending upon the context. The state response is largely dependent on the attitudes of its individual representative.

2. The consistent and symmetrical partnership between the community, the VOs, and the non-government sources of funding can reduce the dependence on the government.

3. The interest of the market often stands in contradiction with the voluntary sector and it often plays a decisive role in determining the state and VO relationship.
4. Too much of dependence on the state adversely effects the sustainability of a project, as state is not consistent in its role performance due to the consistent pressure from the lethal nexus between the power elite and the market forces.

5.5 ISSUE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The community participation is an integral component of Gandhian model of development. Gandhi always visualized community in the form of village community. Despite various divisions arising out of castes and class, the village community solidarity has been a significant and unique feature on Indian traditions. The village community in India has been widely recognized for its territorial solidarity and the potential for the collective action. It will be worthwhile to recall Y. Singh’s observation that villages in India demonstrate many elements of structural unity, such as sentiment of territorial ‘political’ kinship and economic solidarity (Y. Singh 1994). Henry Orenstein adds, as territorial cohesive units the village communities still continue to exist (Orenstein: 1965). As far as relationship between caste is concerned, David Pocock argues, the inter-caste relationship in the villages are not only governed by dominance but also reciprocity, the institution which illustrate this phenomenon in the village is Jajmani (D.E. Pocock: 1962). Thus, the existence of community sentiments has been an inherent feature of Indian traditions.

However, it would not be appropriate to blindly accept the concept of village solidarity, which might have existed in the traditional India. There are several other village level socio-economic realities, such as caste-clan nexus, factional dominant caste, deformed castes, and gender discrimination, which determine the pattern of relationship in the village. In addition to these micro level socio-political realities, the government policies emphasizing on increasing centralized development interventions and under-estimation of community’s potential have made the task of organizing the community for a collective action very difficult.

However, the government has made some efforts to decentralize the development process through programs like Community Development Program (CDP) and policy interventions such as 73rd, 74th, and 80th constitutional amendments. The outcomes of
CDP were not very encouraging. While, results of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments are yet to be seen, the reports from Rajasthan, which has experienced Panchayat election based on these constitutional amendments, are encouraging.

We discussed earlier that in the present scenario, which is characterized by a distrustful relationship between the government and the community, voluntary organizations are a potential agency to bridge the gap. The voluntary organizations have certain inherent features, which enable it to rejuvenate community confidence and its willingness to act as a unit at the village level. Some of these features are listed below:

1. VOs emerge out of community needs and development requirements. The TBS and the PSI, both present encouraging cases. TBS is part of people movement in Alwar district while the PSI emerged as nationwide movement to advocate for the need of revitalization of indigenous technology at micro level, which suits to community level practices and its resources.

2. There is a consensus that if the community is involved in project identification, planning, and implementation, it will positively come forward to participate in the project. Case studies in Palamau and Alwar present successful cases of community’s involvement in all the above-mentioned processes, which certainly encouraged the community participation.

3. Since community participation is a voluntary act, it can be evolved only through a voluntary process, which is an inherent characteristic of the VOs.

4. At the practical level, if we recall our experiences, the people in India have shown very indifferent attitudes towards resources pumped-in by an outside agency (the government) as people do not have sense of belonging-ness with them. Therefore, if the community puts its own resources, chances of its participation will be better. The case of ‘Johad’ building Alwar bears testimony to this, as through ‘Sramdan, community had a significant contribution in building them and subsequently it imbibed a sense of belonging-ness. Such sense of attachment with the project is very necessary for its sustenance.
5. The community lacks representation at the macro level and the voluntary organizations have been very successful in articulating its interests at this level. This role of VO makes the community feel empowered and consequently brings it close to the VO and establishes a relationship of trust between them. The relationship of trust between the community and VO is the first step towards their effective partnership.

6. VO live close to community and understand the local needs and means to meet these needs more than the government agencies. Once the felt needs are identified and articulated in an appropriate way, the process of community participation becomes relatively easier. The water was the root cause of all the problems for the people of Thanagazi. The TBS rightly identified this problem and an appropriate means (Johad) to solve it. Since TBS hit the issue close to the people’s heart and mind, it could manage to secure a high degree of community trust and subsequently its participation.

As far as community empowerment is concerned, we have to look at it beyond the narrow perspective of economic development. Instead, it involves political consciousness, solid organization, attitudinal change, and of-course economic development. Therefore, the process, which starts with community participation, leads to community empowerment.

The VO’s role as ‘Advocate’ and ‘Critic’ play a very significant role when we think of community empowerment at a larger level. The issue of ‘Jal, Jangal and Jamin’ which cuts across village boundaries has been very effective in Thangazi in enhancing the consciousness of the community and in changing its attitudes towards the external world. However, the fact remains that economic independence would be the first step in this process. Once the community is economically independent, it can think of political consciousness and participation in larger macro level issues. However, the process of empowerment starts right from the village level by community taking over its development programs from the government or any other outside agency. The voluntary organisations have to play a very significant role in giving initial training, organizational, and motivational support to the community in this regard.
Therefore, the community participation and empowerment are inter-linked and two different points of the same continuum of a larger rural development process. The rural development and community participation and empowerment are complementary to each other and the VOs are the most effective agency to facilitate this complementary process. (Please refer diagram 5.4)

Diagram: 5.4
Relationship between the process of rural development and Community Participation and Empowerment

Rural Development

VO

Community Participation

Community Empowerment

Thus the above discussion indicates that we can not afford to ignore the immense potential of voluntary organization any more, if we wish to and are willing to involve the community in the mainstream of development process.

5.6 Summing-up

Going back to our research questions, the study can be summed-up with the following concluding remarks on our research questions.

1) The existing approach to rural development demands for immediate intervention to adopt a more suitable approach, which has a greater scope for community participation and community empowerment.

2) Along with other development needs of rural India, in case of water management and conservation also large-scale dams and major irrigation projects may be replaced by micro watershed development projects to suit the local needs and resources.
3) The voluntary organizations can play a very specialized role in rural development provided they adopt appropriate strategy and complementary support from the government.

4) Due to a continuous pressure from the nexus between power elite and market forces, state may not be consistent in its approach to rural development programs. Therefore, we need to think of an alternate approach to rural development, which is not entirely dependent on the state.

5) The community participation and community empowerment are the immediate need for a successful rural development process in India and voluntary organizations are the best agency to facilitate and complement the governmental efforts in this process.